

# Focus on Improving Service and Accountability

## Enterprise System for Grants, Contracts, and Loans Management

### The Problem

The Departments of Ecology and Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED) control and disburse millions of dollars in grants and loans. Money from both agencies is often needed to help local governments pay for large projects such as sewage treatment plants. But how can communities easily search for grant and loan opportunities? And what if a legislator or citizen wants a clear and instant picture of how much was spent and what was achieved in, say, a specific community?

Our customers – the people who might want to apply for grants and loans – have no fast, clear picture of what money is available. They must check with each of the programs in Ecology and CTED individually. There is no centralized, on-line access to the information they need. And every time they apply, they must provide much of the same information in each application and repeat steps they may have already taken. This is not the business-friendly, efficient process envisioned by the Governor, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), or the recent Berk & Associates study.

And to be sure, Ecology and CTED can always answer questions, but it takes time. It can mean pulling together information scattered in spreadsheets, contract amendments, and memos across the two agencies. In short, a clear picture often has to be custom made. This is not the kind of accountability sought by Governor Gregoire, JLARC, or the two agencies.

### The Solution

The answer is to harness commercially available computer software to greatly improve both customer service and accountability. With agencies sharing the same efficient system, customers could easily find grant and loan opportunities, and then submit applications, progress reports and payment requests on-line. Project monitoring and access to information would be easier for customers and agency staff.

State decision makers would have ready access to information for both Ecology and CTED. And, as more agencies join the system in the future, a clear picture will come into view across the entire state of where grant and loan money went and what was achieved.

### A Joint Effort

Ecology and CTED will work with the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to create a model for improved grant, contract, and loan business processes across all agencies. The benefits include:

- ✓ Improved collaboration across agencies
- ✓ Faster, better business processes for our customers and agency staff
- ✓ Streamlined and integrated program services
- ✓ More proactive project monitoring
- ✓ Avoided costs for duplicated systems at each agency over time
- ✓ On-line access to better information for better decisions and better results

## Improvements Recommended by Independent Experts

Investments have already been made to modernize business processes. For example, Ecology launched its Loan Tracking System (ELTS) in 2003. While a great improvement, the system only tracks loan amounts due, after project monies have been fully paid out. And since ELTS was designed as an agency system, it would have to be rebuilt before it could be shared with other state agencies.

Much more needs to be done.

The January 2001 JLARC report entitled “Investing in the Environment” calls for:

- Increased systematic collection and sharing of information;
- Streamlined and better integrated program services; and
- Tools to ensure that funding agencies work together.

Three of the eight recommendations from the December 2005 Berk & Associates Study entitled “Inventory and Evaluation of the State’s Public Infrastructure Programs and Funds”, conducted by OFM, also apply to the Enterprise System for Grants, Contracts, and Loans Management project:

- Invest in financial management systems that increase efficiency and reduce duplicated efforts;
- Invest in modern enterprise information systems to support integrated program decision making and reporting; and
- Use information technology to create a single portal of electronic entry into the state’s system for improved information processing, collection, and reporting

## Without the Bill

Citizens and legislators will have to wait another three years for the opportunity to have a fast, clear view into the availability, status, and use of many millions of dollars of grants, contracts, and loans. Cross-agency collaboration will continue to be hampered by lack of available technology.

## Budget and Contacts

### 2007-2009 Budget

Ecology	\$2,746,000 from multiple sources
CTED	\$2,746,000 from multiple sources

### Executive Steering Committee

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